19 April 1987

ON MY MIND | A. M. Rosenthal

# Spies I Have Known

During the last week I was in Poland as a correspondent, three people tried separately to entrap me — a doctor, a writer, an architect.

They were decent people ordered by the police to find out what I knew about the never-published defection of a Polish military attaché. I was leaving under an expulsion order issued because of annoyance with my reporting. It was not connected to the attaché affair, about which I knew nothing.

The three men were drafted into the effort by the Polish secret police, who were apparently trying to work up some kind of charges against me before I left. They had no option but to obey or face continuous harassment. They understood that and so did I.

Earlier and later, I met various kinds of agents of Communist intelligence. At the United Nations, I met a jovial K.G.B. agent accredited as a journalist but almost out in the open who specialized in offering royalties to American reporters, even if they hadn't actually written any books.

At the United Nations I also met a Soviet newsman who later turned up in Afghanistan with Nikita Khrushchev as his personal aide. In India I knew a longtime Izvestia correspondent. I saw him four years later in Ghana, where he was in a different trade — running a Russian airlift to Communist-backed groups in the Congo.

> In the East, a duty to country.

Those Russians were professional agents. They did not have to be pressed into service, as were the Poles, by the police. They *were* the police.

All over the world, I met Russians, Czechs, Poles, Hungarians — news people, musicians, economists — who routinely reported everything they saw to their local embassy. They were neither agents nor people pressured by the police into informing, just Soviet-bloc citizens carrying out instructions, doing their duty of working for the state wherever they were.

All this was as early as the 40's and as late as this year. It comes to mind because of all the talk about espionage — bugged embassies, seduced marines, traitors, trials.

American espionage generally is carried out by the C.I.A. Soviet intelligence is part of the job of the K.G.B., a vast police army whose main job is to control Soviet society — or by the K.G.B. equivalent in Soviet bloc states.

That difference touches the lives of millions.

The U.S. uses Government employees — C.I.A. and military agents — and any useful foreigners they can inveigle. The K.G.B. also uses agents and foreigners but its real asset is its ability to order every citizen at home or traveling to report.

Soviet journalism, of course, is particularly useful as a cover and arm of K.G.B. work.

Routinely, the K.G.B. finds journalistic spots abroad for its agents. Some disguise it, others do not bother.

Like the jolly K.G.B. fellow at the U.N. After a couple of drinks, he would offer reporters money to have their books published in Moscow. If they said they had not written any books, he said they could count it as an advance.

One night, asked where most of his news dispatches appeared, he winked and said on wall papers in factories.

Not every Soviet journalist abroad is an official K.G.B. man. But any Soviet journalist who does not agree to cooperate fully with the K.G.B. not only would never get a second assignment, but would not receive his first.

The few American reporters who did intelligence work for the United States were considered disgraceful by their peers.

The idea that doing intelligence work would be wrong for a Soviet journalist runs directly counter to the Soviet concept of the citizen's duty to the state. And every Soviet journalist knows that journalism particularly is considered to be an instrument of state interest.

But when pressure has to be applied, it is. In Warsaw, in 1959, the first to question me about the attaché was a friend, a writer, an anti-Communist. I was stunned that he had asked me anything about something obviously top-secret. He said frankly that if he hadn't asked, he would have lost his meager freelance living.

The second was the doctor called for a sick son. Sitting on a packing case, he asked me about the attaché. I learned later that minutes after I had telephoned, he had been summoned by the police and told what to ask.

The architect — he asked me to take a packet of letters out of the country. A day earlier a brave Pole had warned me that would happen.

These three — and earlier the Polish editor ordered to seat me in a restaurant next to a wall listening device — were all paying part of the price of being allowed to continue working.

I was neither angry nor indignant. I knew I had never been put to the test myself. And I knew I was the lucky one — I had the passport out.